

to my talk on Panama. The Communist Chinese regime is also involved in a strategic maneuver. Here is our strategic partner involved in a strategic maneuver. One would think if they were our strategic partner that maneuver would be something that we would like, because they are our partners, are they not? No, they are involved in a strategic maneuver to strangle the United States of America, and it is very clear that they have targeted areas in which the United States is most vulnerable. The Panama Canal happens to be one of those areas.

Let me make clear, Panama is where the two major oceans of the world come together, the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans. It is where the two great continents of the Western Hemisphere come together, the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere. This is one of the choke points of the world, this, and the Suez Canal and the Straits of Gibraltar; this and the Molucca Straits near the Spratly Islands.

What do we find? What do we find? We find that the United States of America has removed all of its military personnel from Panama.

I was down, as I say, in Panama a very short time ago, a month ago; and I was shocked to see ghost towns in what had been only a short time ago American military bases. Panama, of course, has no military of their own. They have no military, and they have always relied on the United States military to protect the canal against any type of aggression.

So when I traveled to Panama, and having been there many times in the past and seen many American military persons there to protect Panama and protect our national security interests and protect the canal, I was shocked when I saw they were gone. They are all gone. It is like this hall of Congress now. I am the only Member standing here. When one goes down to Panama where there used to be tens of thousands of American troops, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Army, they were always there; they are gone, and there is no Panamanian military force to take up the slack.

Now, what does that mean to us? Well, that means to us that there is a vulnerability there. There are two vulnerabilities: number one, there is a war going on next door in Colombia and already the narco terrorists, who are allied with Fidel Castro and the people who hate the United States, already those guerrillas have infiltrated into the Panamanian military. There is nothing standing between them and the Panama Canal. That alone should cause alarm bells to go off because the Panama Canal is vulnerable to sabotage. I will not go into detail, but it is incredibly vulnerable to sabotage.

What concerns me more is the overwhelming evidence of a Chinese presence and even domination of Panama in the Panama Canal, something that is in the process of happening. That, to

me, was even more frightening because I know that we can blink our eyes and this magnificent achievement of the United States, a canal between the two oceans, something that we rely on in times of international emergency so we can send our ships from one ocean to the other and take off days, actually a week, of travel around the Horn in South America, that that Panama Canal now is totally vulnerable and is slowly coming under the domination of the Communist Chinese.

Now, let me say what I mean. There is a company called Hutchison Whampoa, run by a man named Li Ka-Shing. He is part of the clique, he is part of Beijing's inner circle, he is a front man, and his company is a front for the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government, in fact, owns over 30 percent outright of his company.

This company is tied, not closely but tied totally within the small circle of elite of the Beijing regime. This company now has won the contract which provides them control of all of the port facilities on both ends of the canal.

Now, to be fair about it, there are some other new port facilities further away that are being built but on both ends of the canal, directly outside of the canal. Those port facilities are now under control of this Communist Chinese front company.

Now, how did that happen, and what does that mean? When I went to Panama, the first thing I did was try to go down to those areas that are now under lease arrangement. By the way, it is not a 10-year lease, not a 25-year lease. The lease is giving them up to 50 years of control of these strategic positions on both sides of the canal. By the way, the lease agreement also gives them concessions on certain ways of how the Panama Canal will be run, the piloting of the ships, et cetera.

They are also in negotiations and are trying to, and I am not sure if this is part of the lease or not, to get control of one of the air bases in Panama, the Howard Air Base, as well as some of the other military facilities that we left behind.

Now, how did that happen? What has gone wrong here? What is happening? How can a country that is considered to be belligerent, and many people are trying to have a realistic policy, considered to be belligerent and hostile to the United States, end up with a commanding position in the Panama Canal and a position to dominate this strategic waterway? How did that happen? Where was our intelligence? Where was the NSA? Who were they listening to? Where was the CIA?

I think the CIA and the NSA probably did their job. The trouble is that they are reporting to the Clinton administration; and everywhere in the world where we look, where America's national security has been put in jeopardy by the Communist Chinese, the fingerprints of the Clinton administration are all over the crime scene. The people who are supposed to be pro-

tecting our interests are not protecting our national security interests.

So I went down and I met with the ambassador, the ambassador to Panama from the United States. I asked the ambassador, I said, Mr. Ambassador, how did they get this contract? I said, In fact, I have even heard that there might have been some bribery involved here.

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He says, oh, we do not know if there is any corruption involved in this. I said, what do your intelligence reports say? He said, what intelligence reports? I said, what does the NSA say when they are listening in on the conversations involved with the people involved in these negotiations? Well, I do not know, I have not seen those reports, if there are any.

What does your station chief, the head of the CIA there, what does he say? I have not seen any report by him. This is the most important thing that has happened in the past 10 years in Panama, and the ambassador has not bothered to read the intelligence reports of how that contract came into being.

So I said, well, Mr. Ambassador, this is really an important thing. Do you not think you ought to check up on it? And he says, oh, I guess maybe I should. Well, come to find out that there are certain people who work for the government whose job is not to see any evil, not to go looking for those reports.

Our ambassador to Panama happens to have been who? It happens to have been the man who was the chairman of President Clinton's reelection campaign in Florida the last time around. I am not saying that he has done anything corrupt or wrong, I am just saying that he has not looked at these intelligence reports, and he is a political appointee who is highly politically involved with the President's personal political ambitions. Somebody is not watching out for the national security interests of the United States.

So I went out after meeting the ambassador. By the way, the CIA station chief was conveniently not available when I was in Panama, conveniently not available. So I went out to try to find things on my own. I am sorry to report today to my colleagues and to whoever is listening or reading the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on this speech that I was able to find out information that has indicated to me that the lease arrangement, the contract arrangement with this Communist Chinese front company was obtained through bribery of high-level Panamanian officials.

I talked to people who were directly involved with the negotiations, directly involved with the bidding process, and I was told, and these people are afraid to say so publicly, but they told me privately that there were bribes in the millions of dollars that were paid to the former president of